THE MAGIC LANTERN BULLETIN

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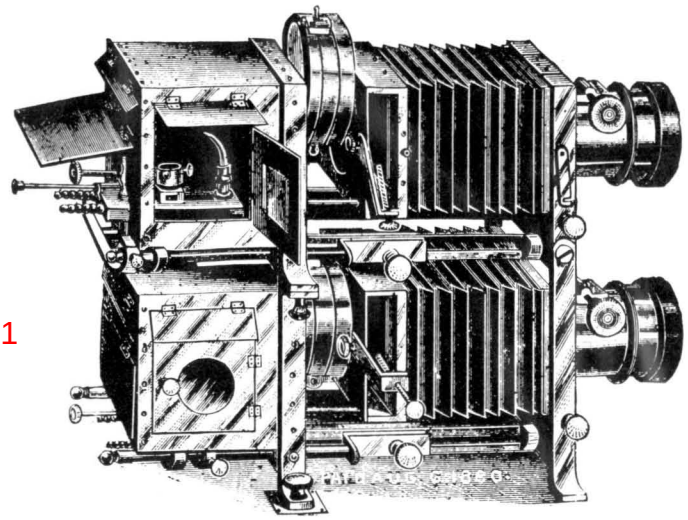
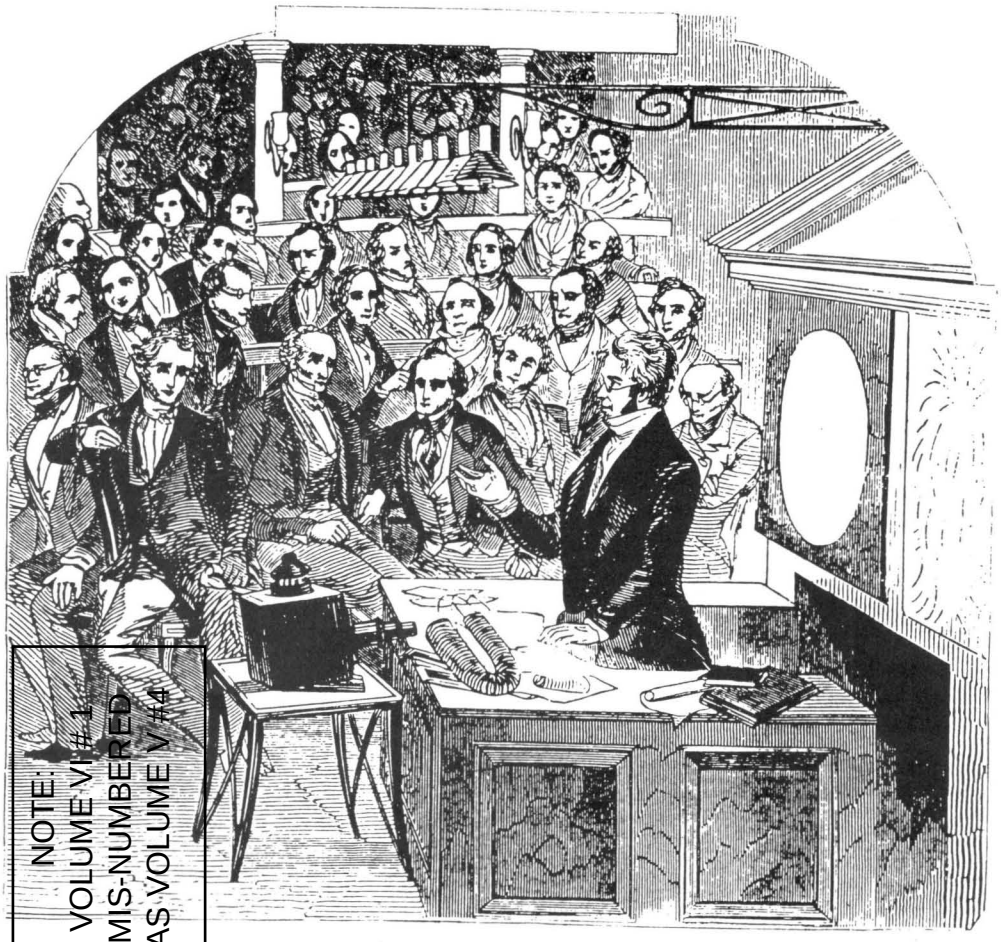
MARCH, 1984



THE IMPROVED "BOSTON IDEAL."



NOTE: VOLUME VI #1 MIS-NUMBERED AS VOLUME V #4

A few weeks ago, I was "weeding" my school library's shelves and discovered a curious phenomenon: books with direct, descriptive titles were checked out regularly while those with flowery, elusive, or obscure titles tended to sit on the shelves and gather dust. I suppose it is human nature to play it safe and stick with the familiar and comprehensible. People like to know what's inside the package and starting with this issue, we're going to attempt to do just that. While all of us have come to know and love the ML BULLETIN over the last five years, the name of our journal means nothing to those outside our small Society. What does "ML" stand for? Any number of possibilities come to the minds of the uninitiated, not all of them flattering or even polite. During a time in which we are actively recruiting members, a title which accurately reflects our interests can be a real boon. While not much of a change, THE MAGIC LANTERN BULLETIN clearly states who we are and will help catch the attention of fellow collectors who are unaware of our existence. You've probably already noticed our new masthead and logo. The

improved "Boston Ideal" biunial limelight lantern was first produced and distributed by the A.T. Thompson Company of Boston in 1880. While American lanterns lacked the natural beauty and drawing-room elegance of those produced in England, they were praised for their superior optics and innovative design. Ugly but eminently functional, the Thompson lantern was typically American.

Both Bob Bishop and Dick Balzer's articles in this issue deal with membership. THE MAGIC LANTERN BULLETIN can continue to attract new members in several ways. First, as the most concrete evidence of our Society's work, the BULLETIN can search out& publish articles of lasting worth to collectors and scholars. Second, it can provide a forum for members and others to express their opinions and state their interests and meet and correspond with those who share the same. Third, it can serve as a marketplace for members seeking new materials for their collections or those wishing to sell items.

THE MAGIC LANTERN BULLETIN
(formerly the ML BULLETIN)
is published quarterly by the
Magic Lantern Society of the U.S. and Canada. Annual dues are $10.

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In regard to the third of these, the BULLETIN has hitherto run a small BUY/SELL/TRADE column and offered an annual free ad to members. Beginning with the next issue, we will extend inexpensive rates for full, half, and quarter-page advertisements. Regardless of whether you're buying, selling, or trading, fellow-collectors are waiting to hear from you and there is no more effective way of reaching them than through THE MAGIC LANTERN BULLETIN! A full-page ad will cost $18, a half-pager will run $10, and a quarter-page advertisement will be $7.50. Members will, of course, still receive 25 free words of classified advertising per year. Additional classifieds will run 10¢ a word.

Back issues of the BULLETIN represent another source of potential revenue for the Society. In the past, we have practically given our publication away. Effective immediately, individual back issues of THE MAGIC LANTERN BULLETIN will cost $2.00 apiece, five to ten mixed issues will be $1.50 apiece, and more than ten back issues will cost $1 each. This flexible rate schedule will allow new members to acquire a complete run of issues at a reasonable price. All issues are available directly from the editor.

Finally, BUT BEST OF ALL, the 2ND CONVENTION OF THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY OF THE U.S. AND CANADA is currently being planned for the early fall in Cleveland, Ohio. Several sites within the city are being considered and a number of local groups have expressed interest in co-sponsoring the event. A special mailing will be sent to Society members as soon as a final date is set.

The next issue of the BULLETIN will feature a complete convention schedule. The theme of the next issue will be "Pre-Cinema Optical Devices" and will allow members with expertise in the areas of mechanical slides, cinematographes, thaumatropes, praxinoscopes, et al to strut their stuff, Illustrations are always appreciated! Submit all articles to the editor by June 1, 1984. (Oops! I almost forgot; this month's unusual cover depicts Faraday addressing the Royal Society in 1846 with the help of--what else?--his trusty magic lantern. From an excellent book entitled THE VICTORIAN SCENE: 1837-1901, by Nicolas Bentley, published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson (London) in 1968.)

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN
By Dick Balzer

Larry asked me if I wanted to put something in this edition of our journal. My first response was no, but after thinking about it, I decided I did. First, I want to say how honored I feel to be the new Chairman. I was gratified when Joe Koch, a man I respect, asked me to consider it and now having received many kind, supportive letters from so many of you, I am glad that I accepted the position. I am also very glad that Larry has agreed to remain as editor of the BULLETIN and Terry Borton has agreed to become Secretary/Treasurer. I hope with the support of the membership, we three will collectively provide the leadership the Society needs.

During the coming year, I would like to focus the Society's attention on the following areas:

1) Staging another national convention. The English Society is planning a Tenth Anniversary Convention next year and I hope we can mount one in the fall of 1984. Larry has volunteered Cleveland as a location and to serve as convention coordinator. Please let me know of your interest in such a meeting and if you would be willing to serve on the convention committee.

2) I would like to continue to expand the membership of the Society. I am glad to report after having attended the annual general meeting of the English Society in January that I returned home with eight new UK members. Still, given the enormous size of our country and interest in collecting, our membership must be viewed as rather meager. Any ideas of how to broaden our appeal and strengthen our appeal would be greatly appreciated.

3) Continuing the journal. We have been fortunate to have had Leora Wells and now Larry Rakow editing the BULLETIN. It is a first-class publication; one that we can be rightly proud of. As a society, we should continue to push for the level of achievement it represents.

4) Added revenues. Most small organizations--including ours--are always a bit short of money. It is a constant dilemma. Nevertheless, we needn't fully accept this "reality" and should seek ways to reverse it. We might hold an annual mail auction or, as Bob Bishop has suggested, start a line of magic lantern greeting cards. I would like to see some entrepreneural members help figure out what to do with this.

5) Adopting bylaws. We once made a go of trying to come up with some bylaws, but very few of the members responded to a draft supplied by Bob Bishop and others. I hope to revive this effort and have a working document accepted.

I do not know whether this strikes people as a short or a long list of things I hope to accomplish. I do know that I can't accomplish them alone. I hope many of you will find one or more of these items of interest and volunteer to work on them. If you do, be prepared for me to relinquish the leadership on any of these individually or collectively to you because a society without an involved membership is really not much of a society.

I look forward to our working together.

OPEN HERE

THE "LANTERNA MAGICA" IN PRAGUE
by Robert H. Woodward

The magic lantern in Prague is not an antique. Rather, the "Lanterna Magika" is a vital theatrical force, gaining an international reputation as one of the most original theaters in the world.

For the past four years, the Lanterna Magika, largely under the creative guidance of Josef Svoboda, has been performing Antonin Masa's play Night Rehearsal at the Narodniho Divadlo (National Theater), the largest stage in Prague. According to an announcement (translated from the Czech by Taras Lukach, Foreign Languages Department, San Jose State University), "the entire action takes place in the Lanterna Magika during the night rehearsal for a performance of Shakespeare's Othello. The danger exists that this will become a run-of-the-mill staging of established theater. The guest stage manager decides to shake up the performing artists in order that they might deliver a performance of which they are capable, that they may realize that by only playing their roles and not creating them they only pretend and do not really experience their lives. Thus the play is about the battle against wasted human life. The theatrical medium, the theater, which is the image of the world, makes it possible to show this actual problem in concentrated but very concrete form."

Although Night Rehearsal has not been published, an English translation by Gene Maly has been adapted by Howard Burman and N.C. Sorkin. Burman has obtained production rights for all English-speaking countries. The opening of the play in the United States promises not only to be a significant theatrical event, since the drama of the Czech literary renaissance is for the most part underground even in its own country, but will perhaps revitalize the name "magic lantern" for theater-goers and remind them of the important role played by the magic lantern in entertainment history.

A LOOSELY RUN SHOW
by Bob Bishop

Some years ago, while presenting a program at the Washington State Museum in Tacoma, an elderly couple evinced warm interest in The Last Magic Lantern Show. But, being novices, they drew too close to my lantern. Before I could warn them away they were bitten by the bug of the lantern, which we all know is every bit as damaging as the fabled nip of the Gold Bug, whose heyday was the year of '98.

As a result of this unforeseen incident, Joe and Alice Koch began collecting. They now possess literally thousands of lantern slides: fine single slips, dissolves, levers, chromos and ratchets and of course a number of lanterns.

Time passed and and as the Kochs began giving public shows, Joe found it almost a necessity to form a Society of like-minded people. The idea of such a Society was first broached to me by Galen Biery, lantern slide historian of Whatcom County, Washington, during 1975. But Joe Koch was the person who seized the moment and ran with the ball! For years, he and Alice carried the main load of this fledgling

organization with help from Leora Wood Wells, Ed Lennert, and all those who volunteered for other mundane chores.

The Northwest Group began to hold meetings in March of 1980, instigated by myself. In December of the same year, Chairman Koch appointed me to be Chairman of the By-Laws Committee. After months of effort, the By-Laws were presented to the Society membership. Of the ballots returned, a majority approved. Chairman Koch announced the acceptance of the By-Laws in the July, 1981, issue of the BULLETIN.

Edward Lennert and Mr. Bob Mayer of the George Eastman House were instrumental in presenting our first national convention in Rochester, N.Y. This Magic Lantern Convention was the first of its kind, I believe, in nearly one hundred years.

Bob Woodward has compiled a magic lantern bibliography on behalf of the Society. Nancy Bergh has done the same for the Illustrated Song series. Others are engaged in similar endeavors. Much time and effort is being put forth by many.

Joe and Alice, along with others, have laid a foundation for this Society to build upon. Now it behooves the rest of us to build in a careful and planned manner. This effort will require individual members to do more than merely pay dues and receive the BULLETIN.

It is possible to gain more members. It avails nothing to say, "But I do not know anyone else interested in the lantern." This Society embraces more than just the lantern. We have members who are interested in the "philosophical toys" of the transitional period. We have members who are film buffs. We have members who are writers, filmmakers, television personnel and on and on.

Consider doing as I have done in the past (and will continue to do in the future). Read the "coming events" column in your local paper. When you learn of anything relating to the visual medium such as camera club meetings, slide shows, old movies, mixed-media presentations in schools, community clubs, libraries, or civic centers, try to contact those presenting the program. As you know, most people are totally unaware of this Society's existence. Spread the word!

If each member would make an earnest effort to recruit one new member a year, many problems confronting our Society would vanish. Of course, new problems would take their places, but this is part and parcel of all organizational growth. With added membership, we could enlarge the BULLETIN and could continue to present the many facets of this gem we call the magic lantern.

This Society also needs additional income. This income must come either from increased annual dues, increased membership, or other sources. Hopefully, all our members will live forever, but just in case some are beginning to feel their mortality, can we consider the possibility of gifting to the Society?

First, however, we must attempt to solve our problems through our own efforts. Perhaps the Chairman's idea of an annual mail auction is one way. The English have no qualms about charging 10% of the prices realized for their services in conducting auctions. Why could we not do the same? After all, the mailing list is the only asset the Society owns; it should be used for the benefit of the Society. This should not be construed as advocating a limitation on trade, barter, gift, or sale of merchandise from one member to another. The purpose of this Society has been and still is to promote contact and correspondence among members. I do suggest that the Society be the beneficiary of membership-wide autions on a percentage basis.

Another possible source of income might be the sale of reprints of prior BULLETINS at

a nominal profit to the Society. All new members would be pleased to obtain good copies of previous BULLETINS. Most likely there are many current members who would like addtional clean copies. It would not surprise me if our English counterparts would also be interested in securing copies of our BULLETIN. After all, there is relatively little lantern reading material in the public domain.

Think of the lovely card featuring the magic lantern made up by Joe Kloss, our Arizona member, the last two Christmas seasons. Think of the card sent by Mike Smith featuring a reproduction of a lantern slide, "Compliments of the Season." A lovely holiday card. Another card by Nancy Bergh is a Christmas scene highlighting a lantern slide of three young lovelies hanging their stockings on Christmas Eve. This card was put out by the Family Tree Company, Box 6270, Norman, Oklahoma 73070. They drew on the collection of John Ripley.

With the wealth of material in this Society, could we not do likewise? Not only Christmas cards, but Valentines Day, Mother's Day, etc. Of course, the idea would cost money. Everything does. But we must begin somewhere. At least the idea could be discussed with people in the business of printing such material.

But this is all in our future and hopefully our new Chairman will be able to lead the way. Joe and Alice have said "Fare well." But I don't fully believe their farewell. Only yesterday, I took notes as they presented a program at MOHI (that's the Museum of History and Industry to you outlanders).

"I run a loose program," begins Joe. "Interrupt me with questions if you wish." He then states, "Some say, when it comes to the lantern, Sir Francis Bacon began it all--" Then come in rapid succession historic slides of early-day western forts, block houses, & coastal fortifications which existed for decades but never fired their long tom rifles except for practice.

Sally Hughes, from south west England, took over the narrative as scenes were shown of the great Seattle fire of 1889, when twenty-five blocks of downtown Seattle were reduced to bricks and ashes in less than twelve hours.

Gold Rush slides of Chinese laborers working the tailings were followed by a fine display of mechanical slides including the dancing skeleton and its companion piece, the Jigging Sailor. One of Koch's strongest series is the illustrated story of Roger Duncan, a potato vendor in old London town.

Then to finish, some fine automobile advertising slides touting the glory of the Ford. The show ends on a risque note as scenes of Medallion, Royal Worchester and Bon Lee corsets are shown. As the ladies blush, the goodnight slide appears.

And that is enough for...

...The Old Projectionist

NEWS FROM THE NORTHWEST GROUP
Alice Koch

The Northwest Group of the Magic Lantern Society continues to meet three times a year. Our last meeting was held at the home of the Louis Morans in Bellevue, Washington on April 8, 1984. Two of the guests were a young lady named Susie Seniuk and her husband. They are travelling around Washington state under the auspices of the State Arts Commission teaching animation to young people. The children learn how to make moveable slides, zoetropes and other animated objects.

Members of the group who have recently given shows include the Bob Bishops and Joe Kochs. Bob's performances have included have included the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle, the Queen Ann Historical Society, the Lake Burien Retirement

Home, and the Magnolia Lutheran Church.

The Koch's have also shown at the Museum of History and Industry as well as at the Auburn Business and Professional Women's Club, the Des Moines Historical Society, and the Tukwila Senior Center. Both the Kochs and Bishops have several upcoming dates on their calendars.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As we went to press, we learned of the death of former member Derek Ramsden of Bradford, West York, England. Mr. Ramsden passed away in February following a severe heart attack last fall. He corresponded regularly with many members of the American Society and will be remebered, as Bob Bishop wrote, "as a vital, exuberant, friendly man who went to great lengths in an effort to make us feel totally welcome during the days of the (English) convention." A truck driver by occupation, Derek Ramsden was recognized as such an authority on the Bamforth postcards and magic lantern transparencies that he was on more than one occasion referred to as "Mr. Bamforth." He will be missed.

Member Grace Frederick from Arizona would like to hear from anyone who can provide information on the moving dot or "bouncing ball" that was used to highlight the lyrics during sing-alongs. This technique was used over a lengthy period, having been employed in both magic lantern shows and Mitch Miller TV programs. Can anyone out there help Grace?

Those who read and enjoyed new member George Layne's article in the last issue of the ML BULLETIN will be interested in knowing that Dr. Layne recently presented a recreation of Dr. Kirkbride's therapeutic magic lantern show as part of the festivities marking the 200th anniversary of the founding of Pennsylvania Hospital. I received a copy of the hospital newsletter describing the show and it sounds as if the audience was as enraptured by the show as Kirkbride's patients had been 100+ years ago (but Dr. Layne's audience was permitted to leave the grounds once the show was over!).

Terry Borton is working on plans to publish a small book with the Society's help, tentatively entitled A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE HISTORY AND COLLECTION OF MAGIC LANTERNS. Employing a chronological and thematic approach, the volume will attempt to trace the development of the lantern and the various formats of slides that were produced. Anyone interested in helping Terry should get in touch.

Jilliana Ranicar Breese wants information on magic lanterns made in the shape of a Buddha: who made them; where were they manufactured; does anyone have one?

Is anyone interested in cataloguing and indexing all MAGIC LANTERN BULLETIN's--past, present, and future? It sure would be handy when a question arises to have an index to consult. If interested, contact Dick Balzer or the editor.

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